

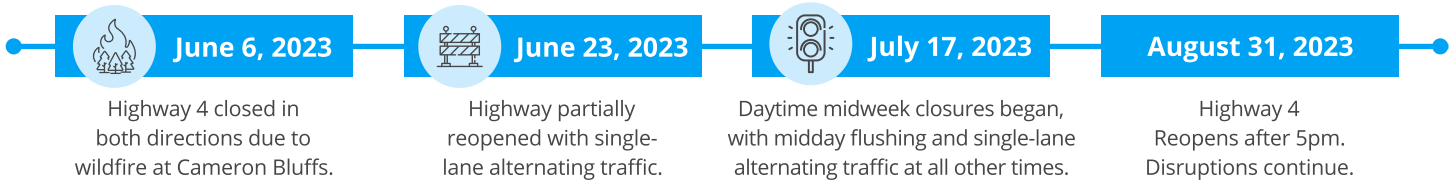
Alberni - Clayoquot Chambers of Commerce Highway 4 Disruption and Resiliency Solutions

On June 6th, 2023, Highway 4, between Cathedral Grove/MacMillan Provincial Park and Koen Road (approximately seven kilometres), was closed in both directions at approximately 3:30 p.m. due to the growth of a wildfire at Cameron Bluffs above Cameron Lake. The highway remained closed for two full weeks and disruptions continued throughout the summer and fall. In an effort to better understand the disruption impacts and identify effective solutions, the Chambers of Commerce in the Alberni-Clayoquot region (Tofino, Ucluelet, Alberni Valley) supported an impact review and resiliency report.

The summary of findings and comprehensive report were informed by a broad-based engagement approach that included surveys, workshops, and focus groups, as well as research on practices from regions and areas frequently impacted by disruptions.

Report Contents

- ✓ Methodology
- ✓ Full Summary of Impacts
- ✓ Summary of Existing Emergency Programs
- ✓ Full Summary of Solution Themes
- ✓ Case Studies



Closure Lost Revenues (estimated)

\$14.9 million Port Alberni
\$14.5 million Ucluelet
\$31.2 million Tofino

Highway 4 Junction traffic was down 38% for June 2023 year over year.



Project Purpose

- ➔ An assessment of the impacts experienced by the region's local businesses, industries, and the tourism sector due to the highway closure and ongoing disruptions including a quantification of the economic losses.
- ➔ Identification of gaps and challenges in the region's long-term resiliency (including infrastructure, policies, programs, etc.), and strategies to address those gaps.
- ➔ Identification of individual and shared strategies to support business continuity and resilience in the event of future emergencies/challenges.
- ➔ Recommendations for investment by provincial, federal, and other agencies in the region to support economic resiliency.

Findings

Six Major Closure Impacts

- 1** Major delays and interrupted deliveries up-and downstream
- 2** Significant loss of revenues and increased costs
- 3** Serious disruptions to important services (health and other)
- 4** Increased anxiety and stress for business owners, compounding COVID financial stress
- 5** Degradation of the workforce and workforce income
- 6** Longer-term tourism revenue and reputation impacts

Seven Solution Themes

1. Critical infrastructure

Build critical infrastructure, such as alternative land routes, enhanced marine and air infrastructure, to ensure essential services and supply chains are not disrupted.

2. Mechanisms and processes to improve communication

Add capacity to improve communications to public/visitors and stay relevant in a sea of social media reporting.

3. Planning and preparedness at multiple scales

Create/strengthen interagency governance, logistical and communications systems; build personal relationships between agency staff; provide training and contingency planning.

4. Short and long-term recovery funding

Identify new/potential funding sources such as new tourism funds for disruption responses, BC emergency financial assistance, delayed government remittances and insurance solutions early, and secure.

5. Business continuity planning assistance

Encourage and support business continuity planning across the region. Tailor mechanisms and approaches for delivering assistance so they are appropriate for a given sector and business capacity; continuity planning should coordinate and align with public sector continuity planning.

6. Deeper business and community connections

Foster and deepen business and community connections throughout the region. Create structures such as an economic emergency preparedness group.

7. Alternative business models

Develop alternative business models that reduce seasonality of local economies, especially in tourism and agriculture, to help businesses be less vulnerable to seasonal hazards.

Response/ Recovery Issues

- **Lack of a funding support response (insurance, government resources, etc.)**
- **Lack of streamlined and effective communications**
- **Lack of room inventory in Port Alberni and Parksville/ Nanaimo (for people to stay during road closures.)**

If we did not make alternate arrangements (driving and getting our stock/ heat pumps, furnaces, air conditioners, etc.) we would have lost roughly \$214,036 in revenue. We are also out approximately \$3000 in hotel fees, \$1300 in food costs for employees, \$700 in flights, and about \$800-\$1000 in gas.

Room revenue combined for Tofino and Ucluelet in June 2023 alone was \$9.2 million or 49% lower than in June 2022.

Next Steps

This review of impacts and exploration of solutions needs to be shared broadly in order to develop the momentum and commitment required to implement actions that ensure the region is better prepared to handle future disruptions. We recommend the follow next steps:

1

Create a communication plan and co-fund a campaign for stakeholders to share the Highway 4 closure and ongoing disruptions consequences, economic impact and solution themes in order to develop implementation support from other levels of government or agencies.

2

Develop an implementation committee structure among the stakeholders and rightsholders considering connections to existing or new sub-committees for specific issues, e.g., Transportation Advisory Committee for land transport and other.

3

Consider the solution theme action ideas in more detail, assess them for effectiveness versus resources, and develop implementation plans for prioritized actions.